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SUBJECT: KAPISA GOVERNOR CALLS FOR UNIFIED TAGAB SHURA, MISSES  
OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT WITH PEOPLE

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The four shuras of conflict-ridden Tagab in Kapisa province met on March 10 to discuss forming a single unified shura that would address local security issues and bring peace and stabilization to the district. Shura members agreed generally with the proposition, but discussion quickly devolved once specifics on participation were raised. The participants criticized Governor Abu Bakar for failing to deliver promised projects and development in the Tagab District. A second meeting to discuss security in Alasai, where a military operation to retake the district center abandoned to the Taliban in 2008 is about to commence, was canceled following an altercation between the Alasai representatives and Afghan Army, which led to the dismissal by Abu Bakar of the Alasai district administrator.

UNIFIED SHURA TO FOCUS ON PEACE  
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¶2. (SBU) Protected by a substantial U.S., French, and Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) security screen, more than 100 Pashtun members of the four Tagab shuras in Kapisa Province attended a meeting at Tagab District Center, within sight of valleys controlled by Taliban and HIG insurgents. Also present were representatives of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) and Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), the ANSF, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the Norwegian, U.S. and French Embassies, the French Border Control Team, Task Force Warrior, and PRT Kapisa. Governor Abu Baker (a Tajik and former mujahedin commander from the northern half of the province) emphasized that greater security in Tagab district would lead to more development opportunities. Abu Baker emphasized the value of unifying under one shura over the next month so they could speak with one voice rather than four. He argued this unified shura could be a means to talk to the Taliban and other anti-government elements and convince them to lay down their weapons and work with the Afghan government for a better future. Contrary to guidance from Kabul to the IDLG representative, Abu Bakar pledged that members would be paid for participation in the shura through the Afghanistan Social Outreach Program (ASOP) developed by the IDLG and funded by USAID.

¶3. (SBU) While the shura leadership generally agreed with the concept of forming one shura, they did not reach agreement on how the members should be selected. The meeting instead devolved into a traditional shura focusing on the lack of services in Tagab. Each of the leaders complained that the Governor had a history of promising projects and development in Tagab, but rarely delivering. Abu Bakar defended himself, repeatedly telling the crowd that, in fact, the US PRT had spent millions of dollars in Tagab, and the lack of development was internally created by their failure to contribute to security in their district. "I'm trying to give you a horse," he said, "but you don't want to ride it." Afghanistan National Army (ANA) General Zamari expanded on this statement, noting that when he no longer had to waste money fighting the insurgency in Tagab, there would be more money available for development. "When you send your sons to join the Army rather than the Taliban, then we can move

forward," he stated.

#### Reactions

14. (SBU) After the meeting, the IDLG representative, Engineer Farhad, said that he was slightly disappointed that Governor Abu Bakar had pushed the shuras to unite ahead of the implementation of the ASOP program. He noted that the selection process needed wider consultation, as at least eight villages were not represented in any of the four shuras. UNAMA political officer Guillaume Limal conceded that his claim may be true but he was optimistic that they could work together over the next month to ensure that the process was fully representative. Limal was disappointed that some of the enthusiasm from an October Peace Jirga had seemingly dissipated but said he was reasonably pleased with the Governor's speech and the momentum he believed it would generate.

#### Alasai Meeting Scrubbed

15. (SBU) In a pre-meeting with the governor, ANA General Zamari and other provincial officials, Alasai District Administrator Muslim complained that he was unable to provide security as he had only 18 Afghanistan National Police (ANP) officers to cover his entire Taliban-dominated district. He begged the Governor and General Zamari to restore the ANSF presence, and pressed the General for numbers and a timeline. Governor Abu Bakar said he would address Alasai security issues in an afternoon meeting with the district administrator and tribal elders from Alasai. However, the meeting was canceled when the Alasai elders, backed up by the district administrator, refused to allow ANA guards to search them when they

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arrived at the gate to the District Center. When the ANA Kandak (Battalion) Commander interrupted the governor's lunch to tell him of the incident unfolding outside, the governor responded, "Send them away!" The district administrator and all of the elders were then removed from the premises, and the governor promptly departed for Mahmood Raqi, the provincial capital. The following day, the governor had the Alasai District Administrator removed without the approval of the IDLG.

#### Comment

17. (SBU) This meeting achieved the minimal objectives of getting the four shuras together with the governor in Southern Kapisa. Governor Abu Bakar's commitment to the Pashtuns in Southern Kapisa is still shallow despite the lip service he has begun paying them. His failure to make an effort to defuse the situation and reach out to the Alasai delegation was an important missed opportunity, precisely at the moment when their acquiescence if not cooperation with the upcoming military operation is needed.

18. (SBU) It was also apparent that UNAMA had intended the meeting to follow a more technical reconciliation agenda according to its Tagab Stabilization Initiative, but its putative partner IDLG passively deferred to the protocols of the traditional shura. This came despite explicit instructions from the IDLG's deputy director to its representative to make certain that no move was made at the meeting to begin integrating the four shuras or to suggest ASOP payments will be forthcoming (the IDLG is adamant about vetting any potential ASOP shuras members before selection and does not want to give them stipend commitments before USAID has formally signed up to ASOP in the province). The governor himself has a tense relationship with IDLG -- he recently called IDLG's Barna Karimi a "Euro." (Note: Karimi is an Afghan-American with strong ties to Southern California.) The IDLG, in turn, is seriously considering replacing the governor, and his refusal to follow the IDLG's instructions for the meeting will likely push the IDLG further in that direction. U.S. actors, and most directly the PRT, will need to tread carefully with any efforts to bridge the persistent gap between the people, the provincial government, and GIROA in Southern Kapisa.

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